Graham Rising

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/1093461.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Characters:	Will Graham, John Graham - Original Male Character, Original Characters, Other Character Tags to Be Added
Additional Tags:	Speculation, Character Study, Alternate History, Well not really because we don't know anything about Will's past, Alternate Universe - Pre-Canon, Daddy Graham is a serial killer, Other Additional Tags to Be Added, Unhealthy Relationships, Will has more in common with Abigail than he thinks, Minor Character Death, empathy moment, Baby's first reconstruction, Canon-Typical Violence, Mentioned recreational drug use by unimportant side character
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2013-12-22 Updated: 2014-01-04 Words: 4,262 Chapters: 3/?

Graham Rising

by PrinceDarcy

Summary

For a prompt on the Kink Meme. Every killer has their start, even those that aren't necessarily really killers.

This is Will Graham's.

UNDERGOING A REWRITE

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Rabbit Heart

The contrast created by blood on snow comes not just from the difference in color, but the difference in temperature. William watches dark spots form as the blood falls from a thin cut on his hand, a little careless wound from poor handling of a makeshift spear. It lies at his feet now – the sawed-off top half of a hockey stick, jagged hunting knife held to the shaft with duct tape. The blood on its blade is from two sources, William's hand and the dead rabbit hanging over his shoulder.

He hunts when his father starts to look too much like the wanted posters again, when it stops being safe for him to go to the grocery store without the teller calling the police. In the summer, William goes to the farmer's markets with a handful of pocket change and buys fruits and vegetables, fresh and cheap, but it's winter now and there's nothing for sale. William prefers fishing to hunting, but his father says he needs proper meat to grow up strong.

William Graham is sixteen years old and the newspapers say he's been dead for five of them.

His father's name is John, and the newspapers say he's a monster.

William picks up the spear in his bleeding hand and trudges through the snow back to the cabin, speckles of blood on whiteness of the ground like a trail of breadcrumbs behind him. He sews up his own hand with dental floss and scrubs rabbit's blood of the back of his parka as the dead animal boils in a pot on the gas stove, a few handfuls of spices and a bay leaf – the last of what they had left over from when they were able to buy in bulk – thrown in with it to make it not *quite* tasteless.

The cabin is small and most of the lights no longer work, even with the bulbs replaced, and the single gas stove and a small fireplace are the only things there to keep it warm, but that made it cheap. It's in the middle of the woods in Maryland and forty minutes away from Baltimore, and its former owner had no permit to build it. John Graham paid for it in cash without a word spoken to a real estate agent.

They've been there for a year. Two Christmases and William's sixteenth birthday have been spent in that cabin. Two school years' worth of textbooks and notebooks are stacked by the fireplace, each of them bearing one of many false names in them. This time he's William Winchester and he's in his junior year at Forest Park High School, he's at the top of all his classes, and over Christmas holidays he's gutting rabbits with steak knives and doing his homework by firelight.

The broth is ready when William finishes half a dozen pre-calc problems and he hears his father's pick-up truck stop in front of the cabin. It's a bright red loud thing, the most conspicuous car in the world, but disguise is about hiding in plain sight, and when John Graham wants to be, he is the Invisible Man. He disappears from the world when it suits him, but when he doesn't need to be invisible he still is, in a way, because he blends into the crowd, going to PTA meetings in the nicest shirt he owns and shaking the principal's hand.

Those hands are covered in blood when he slinks into the cabin, and he doesn't bother washing them off before William ladles out two bowls of broth and sets them down on their dilapidated table.

"We're leaving tonight. Found a place in DC." John grunts between mouthfuls of broth, picking the bay leaf out of his bowl. A bit of blood comes off his fingers and turns the mostly colorless liquid slightly reddish, but he keeps eating it unperturbed. William nods wordlessly and finds the rabbit's heart in his spoon. They don't have a television, but he knows that if they did, the news anchor would soon be telling everyone that another two were found dead. Mother and son. Mother and son. Mother and son.

Mother.

John Graham has killed seven people. William swallows the rabbit's heart.

John washes the blood off his hands while he does the dishes, throwing his stained shirt into the fire. William knows what it means when they're leaving; his schoolbooks follow the shirt, the fire devouring the paper like a hungry beast. William Winchester dies tonight. He watches them burn as his father disappears into the bathroom, sporting a shaved head and mustache when he leaves instead of the thick, dark hair and full beard he'd gone in with.

William bends his head over the sink without being told to and John takes the straight razor to him next, cropping his unruly curls short. It's a lengthy endeavor, because he hasn't had his hair cut in the whole time they've been in Maryland.

"Maybe I oughta give you some scars." John mutters as curls of black hair fall past William's eyes into the sink, landing in the bit of blood that pooled in the empty bowls. He can feel the edge of the razor scraping over the back of his neck. "Make you look a little more like a man. You're the spitting image of your mom, boy, you know that?"

It's only when his mother comes up that he allows himself to resent his father. The rest of the time he bites his tongue and holds his head high – he can't hold the deaths of six strangers against John, no matter how much it tears him to pieces when he sees the dark-haired boys and their mothers in the papers and finds himself imagining what it would feel like to be them, to die like them. All of them died the same way; blunt force trauma to the back of head. He knows how his father kills them, how he holds them down and bashes their heads into the ground.

He knows because he's seen it, and that's what William lets himself resent.

John and Beth Graham got divorced when William was six months old – John got custody and Beth never visited. William grew up on the boatyards in Louisiana without ever meeting his mother until he was eleven years old. They never had much money, and they moved where John's work as a boat mechanic took him, but it was something like happiness for those eleven years.

Then Beth came back. William never found out why she did, but she came back, one day while he was at school. It seemed like it would be okay, at first; she stayed for a week, with her sister who two streets down from the Graham house. William found he liked his mother,

liked spending time with her after school, and he liked the idea of having a mother and a father. It was childish, idealistic, but John seemed okay with Beth spending time with William, and even coming by for dinner, until she started discussing taking William with her.

She and John fought over it until she left on the seventh day, and when William came home from school on the eighth, John was pinning Beth to the ground in the kitchen, hitting her head against the tile over and over.

William blinked, and when he came to he was in the back of John's truck with duct tape over his mouth.

Five years later and William can still remember his mother's blood all over the linoleum. He can still remember when the first mother and son died and his father came home with that same shade of red on his hands, remember thinking that he was going to die too. To make things even. To make them follow a pattern. Mothers and their sons.

He stays still and shuts his eyes. John doesn't cut anything but his hair.

Stained Linoleum

Chapter Summary

Will is an anomaly. Will breaks the pattern.

Dreams take him back to the true beginning.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

William tries to sleep in the back seat while John drives, curled in the fetal position with an old moth-eaten quilt tossed over him. He knows he'll have to take over soon, once someone finds the bodies, but they have a few hours start to get where they need to go and he always tries to take those few hours of sleep when he can get them.

He closes his eyes and he's eleven years old again, mute as can be even if his mouth hadn't been taped over, wide blue eyes meeting his father's wild gaze in the mirror. John barks at him to shut up even though William isn't saying a word and the world passes them by all too quickly. He doesn't even move a muscle until they pull in at a McDonalds' and John climbs into the back, tearing the tape off William's mouth.

"Are you gonna tell anyone what happened?" John asks. William shakes his head, because that would mean admitting something had happened at all.

"Are you gonna run when we get out of the car?" Another shake of the head.

"Then get up." He says, pulling William upright by the arm. "Chicken nuggets and an ice cream sundae. Your favorite."

John says it like they're just on a regular old road trip and treating themselves and William pretends that they are, even though his face is sore from the tape and he's stiff from lying in the back seat and he has no idea where they could possibly be going, only that it isn't home because home is where his mother is lying dead on the kitchen tile.

He cries silently in one of the stalls in the bathroom, then splashes cold water on his face and decides they're going to Disneyland before he heads back out to meet his father and eat his dinner.

They stay in three different hotels under three different names. The third is the only one with a television and William is in the process of crying himself to sleep on a cot when John turns on the news. His face is right on the screen as it comes on, the anchorman talking all about the double murder of Beth and William Graham.

“*Double* murder. Ha!” John laughs, snapping his fingers and motioning for William to sit up. “Look at that. Double murder. They think you’re dead, Willy-boy! *Double murder.* How ‘bout that.”

William doesn’t really feel all that alive as he tries to wipe away his tears, and that makes it all the less hilarious to him.

“Chin up, boy. Be a man.” John notices the tears before they’re gone, though, and gives an almost conspiratorial wink when William and his mother’s pictures show up on screen. “How many of your friends get to be on TV, huh?”

William falls asleep to John’s dry laughter, and when he wakes up it’s a hot day in June, his student card says William Cohen, and he’s just officially graduated elementary school. His father didn’t come to the ceremony, but William doesn’t mind. He would have had to explain why he didn’t agree to be valedictorian, which would have lead to a discussion over why his grade in oral presentations were so dismal, and the less William has to justify his shortcomings the better.

He finds himself sticking to the fake leather of the worn couch with his hair plastered to his forehead, half-watching a cartoon on the tiny TV in their tiny basement apartment, and even though he can hear the couple upstairs loudly making love, William just doesn’t mind.

Then he hears his father coming down the stairs.

He can smell blood the instant John enters the living room, but William doesn’t look up right away – he even closes his eyes. John likes his meat fresh; he knows a local man who hunts. Sometimes he brings home what seems like half a deer carcass, and, William tells himself, this one could just be extra bloody.

When he finally looks up, it’s at the sound of John washing his hands in the sink, and William’s heart sinks as he sees there’s no blood anywhere but on his father. No deer for dinner. Just blood, red, red blood, up John’s arms and all over his shirt and face.

When his arms and face are clean he beckons William over to him, strips off his shirt and thrusts it in his arms.

“Take it out back to the incinerator and burn it.” He commands, and William nods, his glasses slipping down slightly on his nose. “All your school crap, too. Books, papers, anything that’s got your name on it, you understand me?”

William nods again, because while he *doesn’t* understand, he’s learned to know an order when he hears one.

He hears John laughing that dry, breathy laugh again as he rushes to collect his things and then, two words; “*Double murder.*”

They drive all through the night, and William can tell by where the sun sets that they’re heading north. He sleeps for a few fitful hours in the back seat, summer heat making the car feel like a sauna. Sweat covers him like a sticky blanket but he sleeps as much as he can

before he's woken by the truck coming to an abrupt stop in a diner's parking lot. John hands him a twenty dollar bill when he sits up and sends him in to buy breakfast – coffee for John, apple juice for William and two servings of fish and chips.

There's a TV set to the news in the diner, and that's when William first sees faces of the woman and the boy. A double murder, a mother and son. They're named Mary Lou and Ian Ryerson but that doesn't matter as much as what they look like, because they're both fair with dark, curly hair and blue eyes. Ian wears a pair of round glasses. William takes his own off reflexively, slipping them into the pocket of his shorts.

He pays for everything, waits for it to be ready, and leaves the diner, but he's practically unconscious, because the moment he sees the face of Ian Ryerson he's back in his kitchen watching his mother die, but this time he is John, and John sees his son standing in the doorway and lunges at him next, grabbing him and throwing him to the ground as well, pinning him with a knee on William's narrow chest as he knots his fingers in short, dark hair, tugging upwards and then forcing down, all the strength that John Graham had from years carrying heavy motors put into bashing the back of boy's skull against the ground, manic satisfaction flooding him as eyes go blank and another pool of blood forms on the once-white linoleum tile. In that moment he is John Graham and no one will ever take his son away from him.

And then he is William again, and John is barking reprimands at him for taking so long to get the damn food.

"There was a long line." William lies as he gets into the passenger seat. He considers turning to his father, looking at him and asking why he is alive when Ian Ryerson is dead. Why Ian Ryerson is dead when William is alive. Why isn't there a pattern, why isn't he doing it right?

Instead he focuses on ignoring the lurching of his empty stomach, forcing himself to eat his fish and chips and drink his apple juice even though he no longer has any desire to eat. Food does nothing but sustain a life that he shouldn't even be living, because Mary Lou and Ian Ryerson are Beth and William Graham, and William Graham is meant to be dead.

And then he wakes up, sixteen years old and shivering beneath an old quilt, because it's his turn to drive and John's turn to sleep.

John's snoring within five minutes of William taking the wheel, because when he closes his eyes, he doesn't see himself dying, feel his own skull cracking against linoleum that will never be quite white again.

William grips the steering wheel, and somehow, his heart is still beating.

Chapter End Notes

Nothing like a good flashback.

Good Kid

Chapter Summary

> William doesn't know what his father's standard of "good" is. He's not sure he wants to, but for a moment he's tempted to ask if that's why he didn't kill him with his mother.
>
> Because he is somehow "good", when the other boys were "bad".

They're in another basement apartment in DC, and William knows the instant they walk in why his father was able to bypass all the legal arrangements regarding a lease – even the foyer that they have to go through to get downstairs to their apartment reeks of marijuana, and there's something of a fine veil of smoke clouding it.

Their landlord, in accordance to many a cliché, is dusting some kind of bright orange cheese powder off his left hand as he shakes John's hand with his right, and William takes the duffel bag full of what it was safe for them to bring and slips away down the stairs before he bothers to catch the man's name. He calls him "the gardener" in his mind as he wanders through the dingy basement, because he and his father both know that's what this man is doing. The gardener, accommodating the hunter and… the hunted. Predator and prey in the same cramped box of a basement. It's a shame; William had been starting to appreciate the cabin. Now they have six hundred compartmentalized square feet, a couch that looks like it was attacked by a bear, a TV with a crack through the screen that miraculously still works, a bar fridge and hot plate, a bathroom in which every surface that William can tell was once white is now a pale shade of beige, and a bedroom and a half.

The one that can be called a bedroom is John's, William knows as soon as he looks at it, because the bedroom is always John's when there's only one. He instead turns his attention to that which he considers the half – it's barely larger than a walk in closet, with a bed-less mattress squeezed into half the space, a couple ratty pillows and a sheet thrown over it and a space heater shoved in the corner.

William didn't have a bedroom in the cabin, or in the decrepit excuse for a house they'd lived in before that. His pleasure that he has one here is slightly disproportionate to the reality of the situation, but when he dumps the duffel bag and lays on the mattress to find it softer and more comfortable than either of the couches he'd slept on in the last two years, he feels, for a moment, as if he's living like a king. Even the concept of having his own space at all is remarkable to him; he has a door he can shut when he needs to be alone. It has a lock that he tests and finds to work. He can close himself in completely when he wants to, and more importantly, he can close John out.

Refuge from the hunter.

William half-dozes off lying there, mind set adrift in the violent waves of his imagination as it always is when he lets the wall between his conscious and subconscious crack even slightly. He's fifteen this time, they've been living in the disintegrating old house of an even older blind woman with four cats, his papers says William Jones and he's throwing them in the fire before John's even in the doorway because he knows the signs that they're leaving.

When John does make it in the door William knows they haven't just been found; they're leaving because his father's killed again. The smell of blood in the air is sickening, especially mixed with the already overpowering aromas of cats and the vaguely floral air freshener meant to cover that, but he manages to stop himself from retching and keep a straight face as John tells him what he already knows. *Double murder*. Time for the Joneses to disappear. Time to go.

When he climbs into the passenger seat of the truck with his hair trimmed and his glasses tucked in his pocket, John sitting next to him clean-shaven for the first time in months, William stares straight ahead and speaks barely above a whisper.

"Tell me about them." He says, eyes on the road as the truck starts, because he's going to find out on the news as soon as they see it but he wants more. He wants a reason so he knows why he doesn't fit the pattern.

William knows John's grinning without looking at him.

"Her name was Bonnie Goldstein." He says, the name rolling off his tongue like it's made of silk and silver and tastes like the sweetest wine. "English professor at the local college. Her son's name was Clyde. Funny, ain't it?"

William laughs on command, but his heart feels like it's gone still in his chest, because he knows that name. He tries to tell himself it's a coincidence, just for a minute. Different Clyde Goldstein.

"The kid went to your school. Freshman. You might've known him." John confirms what William fears and he tastes bile. He knew Clyde Goldstein, he'd even say he was familiar with him – he knew of Bonnie, too. Their faces fill his mind, every corner, and he's reconstructing their deaths in his head before John even finishes talking. William's mind tunes him out as he becomes John Graham and kills the Goldsteins. They die how the Ryersons died; skulls cracked open like coconuts. They are Mary Lou and Ian Ryerson and they are Beth and William Graham, and he is John Graham and no one will ever take his son away from him.

Apparently he keeps up decent conversation when he's stuck in his own head thinking about killing, because when John's voice fades back in he's got a wild grin on his face, and he's saying "You're a good kid. Easy to forget sometimes."

William doesn't know what his father's standard of "good" is. He's not sure he wants to, but for a moment he's tempted to ask if that's why he didn't kill him with his mother. Because he is somehow "good", when the other boys were "bad". He doesn't ask. He keeps his mouth shut; he's always been good at keeping his mouth shut. He's been "a quiet boy" in the words of all his teachers since kindergarten, "antisocial" since third grade. "William avoids

interaction with his peers." "William displays an aversion to eye contact." "William shows difficulty with group assignments."

Truthfully, he avoids eyes because they tell them more than he wants to know. He looks a classmate in the eyes and he knows that Jacob's struggling with his sexuality, Allie hasn't kept a meal down in three days, Gayle's afraid her boyfriend got her pregnant – and William doesn't need to know any of that, because he's never going to be *sociable* with any of them when he knows they could have to pick up and leave any moment. He builds up walls and makes forts in his mind to keep the important things hidden away and there's no room left over for making friends he'll likely leave behind forever within a year.

He remembers meeting Clyde Goldstein in the library one day, though. He remembers the sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach when he realized how alike they looked. He remembers looking him in the eyes there and seeing fear and loss and things William saw in himself in the mirror.

They weren't *friends*, but they both liked reading about boats, and that often left them in the same aisle in the library, despite being in different grades. They didn't talk much. Clyde was *quiet* too, in that same condemning way William was quiet.

Bonnie even gave him a ride home from school one day, when the school had to close early because of a ventilation problem and John couldn't come get him. She talked cheerfully and didn't mind when William didn't talk back, but he could see that same fear and loss in her, he noticed the way she jumped when he'd slammed the door of the car a little too hard. He'd noticed that there was no wedding ring on her hand, even though she'd said "I'm Bonnie. But that's Mrs. Goldstein to you, young man," in a prototypical *mom voice*.

Then the fear in her and Clyde took shape. Bad divorce. Rough arrangements with Mr. Goldstein. Fear he'd get custody of her son.

For a moment William feels the strangest relief that Mr. Goldstein never would, but then he's John Graham and he's pounding their skulls into the ground again and the relief turns into disgust.

Clyde Goldstein turns into William Graham in his mind, and this time as John hits his son's head against the linoleum, he whispers "You're a good…"

"…kid!" John barks, and William sits upright instantly on the mattress in the tiny room, the space heater humming. "*Christ*, boy, I thought you were having some kind of seizure or something."

"I think I was asleep." William says hazily, and John laughs.

"Eyes wide open like that? I don't think so. C'mon. *Up*. Dinner's cooking."

Arrangements with the gardener are made, then, and the hunter and the hunted eat unevenly heated Spaghetti-Os on the torn up couch while the news anchor shows the world two more faces dead by the hand of the beast called John Graham. William commands the crack on the

screen to move, to cut through the boy's face so he can ignore how much it looks like his own.

The crack stubbornly stays where it is. He eats his dinner in silence and, eventually, John changes the channel.

End Notes

Yes, they did use the surname "Winchester". No, I'm not sorry.

And yes, John Graham's way of picking his victims is meant to be reminiscent of Garrett Jacob Hobbs.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!